Campaign for Quality

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM CALIFORNIA'S AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

July 2010

CALIFORNIA
AfterSchool
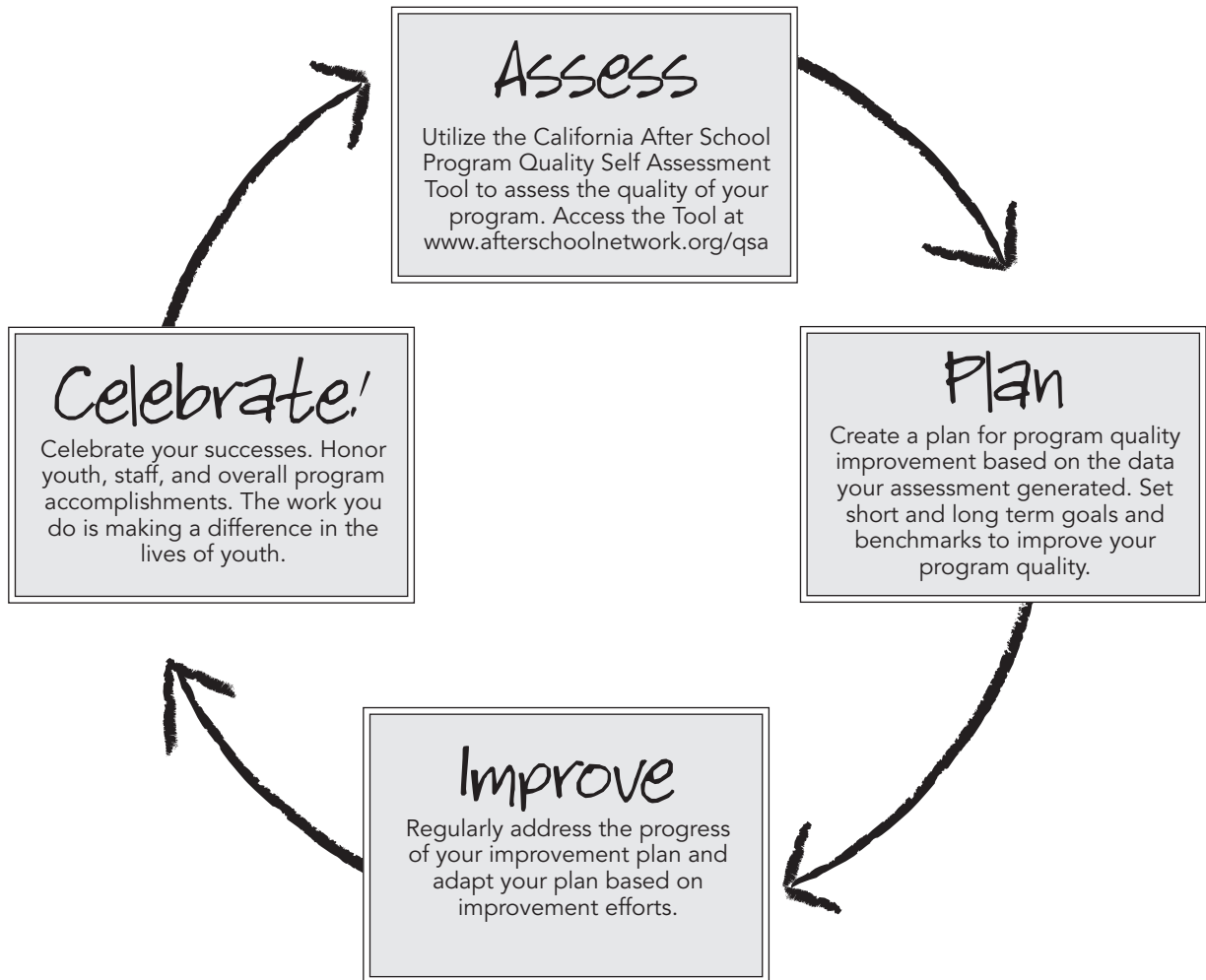NETWORK

CAMPAIGN FOR QUALITY!

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM
CALIFORNIA'S AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Assess

Utilize the California After School Program Quality Self Assessment Tool to assess the quality of your program. Access the Tool at www.afterschoolnetwork.org/qsa

Plan

Create a plan for program quality improvement based on the data your assessment generated. Set short and long term goals and benchmarks to improve your program quality.

Celebrate!

Celebrate your successes. Honor youth, staff, and overall program accomplishments. The work you do is making a difference in the lives of youth.

Improve

Regularly address the progress of your improvement plan and adapt your plan based on improvement efforts.

THE NETWORK TEAM:
WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

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IN AUGUST 2009, the California Afterschool Network and California Department of Education released the *California After School Quality Self-Assessment Tool* (QSA Tool), a comprehensive self-assessment tool that out-of-school time professionals can use to start important conversations about quality.

The *Campaign for Quality! Promising Practices from California's After School Programs* is a companion to the *QSA Tool*, and was created as a next step to follow self-assessment. This guide is a Network effort to support program quality by sharing the promising practices of after school programs statewide.
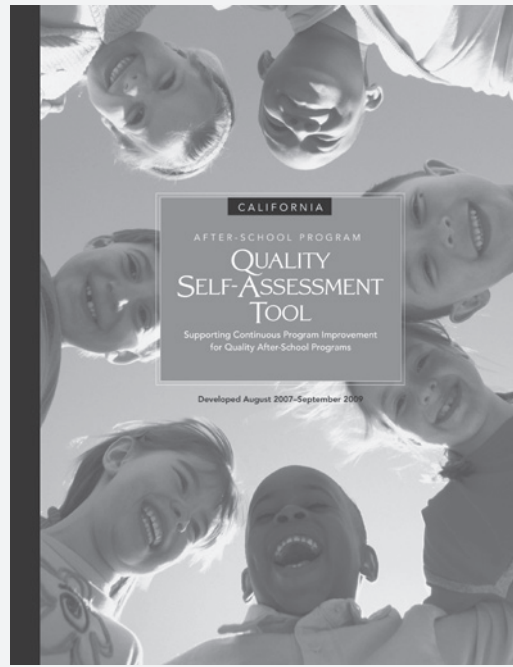
Campaign for Quality!

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM
CALIFORNIA'S AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS;
A COMPANION GUIDE TO THE QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROGRAM DESIGN AND ASSESSMENT—ATTENDANCE

Activities are attended at capacity.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO REACH AND SUSTAIN FULL ENROLLMENT? Below are some ideas around advertising, communicating, and planning, strategies to attract young people to your program.

PLAN
- Offer an exemplary program that young people will want to attend. Quality is the key lever to attendance! Be explicit about program goals, provide staff development on a regular basis, and encourage learning that is student-centered, active, and developmentally appropriate.
- If Program Directors need help, reach out to Regional Leads and CDE Consultants.
- Invest in quality curriculum.
- Do a focus group with kids about what they like to do after school.
- Ask the school Principal for ideas on increasing enrollment.

ADVERTISE
- Hold an open house so that parents and youth can see your program in action.
- Set up informational tables at school and community events.
- Happy participants are your best recruiters. Ask participants to share the news about your program with their friends.
- Send fliers home with youth, place an article in the school newsletter, and utilize the school's automated telephone message system to announce openings.
- Have kids present their success at school assemblies.

COMMUNICATE
- Let parents, teachers and principals know about the academic enrichment component of the program. This may be of added benefit to some youth not already participating in the program.
- Make presentations at staff meetings, PTA meetings, and other gatherings.
- Publicly recognize youth who attend your program often.

CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING FOR TIPS TO USE TO KEEP YOUR PROGRAM FULL:
- Harvard Family Research Project (2004). *Moving Beyond the Barriers: Attracting and Sustaining Youth Participation in Out-of-School Time Programs.*
- California Afterschool Network Research Resources on Behavior/Motivation/Attendance: www.afterschoolnetwork.org

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Assess your program for continuous quality improvement in this category using the *California After-School Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool.* For free access to the tool go to http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/qsatool

> **Try this Tip!**
>
> **To fill the house:**
> - Plan,
> - Advertise, and
> - Communicate

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

Leaders at the district or organization level actively pursue new sources of funding and in-kind resources.
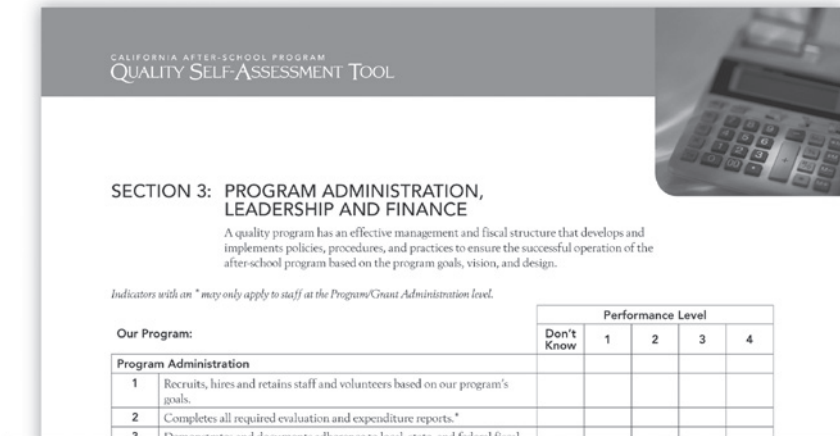
STABLE, SUFFICIENT FUNDING is essential for after school programs to provide high quality service. It is important that leaders find creative sources of funding and resources, especially in hard economic times.

There is a wealth of resources out there, but where do you begin? Below are some tips and strategies to help your program maximize available financial opportunities.

TAP INTO A VARIETY OF FUNDING SOURCES

The funding announcement doesn't have to have "after school" in the title to be a great fit! A variety of public dollars can support after school programs, including Title I funds, Child Care Development Block Grants, hourly intervention funds, Community Development Block Grants, grants through the National Endowment of the Arts and Humanities, and Supplemental Educational Services reimbursements. To be eligible and/or competitive for funding from diverse sources, it's critically important to be actively involved in the collaborative projects and youth-related issues in your community.

Consider expanding your staffing by hosting an AmeriCorps or VISTA volunteer, or a work-study student from a local college or university. Local Workforce Investment Boards may have wage subsidies for local workers.

JOIN LOCAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND REFORM EFFORTS

The word has reached the classroom: after school is a great way to support young people's success in school and the workplace! After school programs are an increasingly visible part of school reform and improvement initiatives, which are supported by public and private grants.

Consider meeting with school officials at the district or county level. Define and advocate for the important role that after school can play in supporting achievement, whether through engaging youth in hands-on learning, supporting their physical and emotional development, or engaging tutors for youth. Use data from evaluations and testimonials from parents, teachers, and youth to make the case that after school is a key partner in school reform.

TO FIND AND LEARN MORE ABOUT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES, LOOK AT THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:

- Afterschool Network: www.afterschoolnetwork.org/funding
- Afterschool Alliance: www.afterschoolalliance.org
- The Finance Project (2007). *Getting the Grant: A Guide to Securing Additional Funds for After School Education and Safety Programs.*
- The Finance Project (2007). *Making the Match: Finding Funding for After School Education and Safety Programs.*
- The Partnership for Children and Youth (2008). *Filling the Gap. Funding Strategies for California After School Programs.*
- California Volunteers, including AmeriCorps and VISTA: wwww.californiavolunteers.org
- Children Now (2009). *After School Programs & Workforce Investment Boards: Making Stimulus Funds Work for Youth.*

> ## Try this Tip!
> Meet with school officials at the district or county level to explain how after school programs can support school improvement.

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COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

The collaborative supports long-term sustainability through joint fundraising and in-kind contributions of services and materials.

THE BENEFITS OF collaboration for programs include maximizing financial resources, avoiding duplication of effort, assuring programming variety, expanding capacity, and creating a united community image. Further, partnerships help to assure sustainability by blending multiple sources of support.

What are some important things to consider for your collaborative to facilitate sustainability by sharing services, resources, and fundraising efforts? Susi Jones, Executive Director for Julian Pathways and the Julian Backcountry Collaborative, shared some promising practices for collaboration.

CONTINUAL AND CONSTANT FEEDBACK ABOUT THE COLLABORATIVE'S PROGRESS
The work that partnerships do hinges on reaching out into the community to find out what is working, and building on those community strengths. This allows collaborative members to set goals based on community priorities, filling in the gaps where in-kind services, fundraising efforts, and materials can make the most difference. Each year, the Backcountry Collaborative holds a visioning retreat focused on ways to effectively sustain its work by being clear about how each partner can contribute.

SHOWCASE EACH PARTNERS' STRENGTHS TO OTHER COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS
For example, each Backcountry Collaborative meeting includes a training for members, led by a Collaborative partner. Recent trainings have included culturally competent practice and how to apply for nutrition assistance from the local Health and Human Services Department. This awareness of partners' unique skills encourages resource sharing, including sharing grant information and providing additional financial support.

TO LEARN MORE IN-DEPTH ABOUT COLLABORATION AND SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES IN FOSTERING COLLABORATIVE WORK, CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING:
- Afterschool Investment: www.nccic.acf.hhs.gov
- California School Boards Association (2009). *Building Healthy Communities: A School Leader's Guide to Collaboration and Community Engagement.*
- American Youth Policy Forum (2002). *Promising Practices in Afterschool Collaboration: What It Takes to Make School-Community Collaboration Work.*

> ## Try This Tip!
> **NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK!**
> Sharing resources is about giving the time and space for people to talk through what they can offer, and what they need.

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ALIGNMENT AND LINKAGES WITH THE SCHOOL DAY

Staff communicate frequently with administrators and faculty to ensure alignment of program activities to the host school's learning goals and curricula.

QUALITY AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS can provide engaging environments that motivate and inspire learning outside of the regular school day. Developing this mutually reinforcing relationship takes a lot of intentional communication. How do you get the right people talking so that adults are doing the best they can for youth?

Marcella Klein Williams, Region 8 Network Lead and Katie Brackenridge, Partnership for Children and Youth, have four tips to facilitate communication between after school and school day staff.

BE IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Schools have a lot of standing meetings that focus on youth and families—go to them! The Student Site Council, Coordination of Services Team, or other leadership school team meetings are opportunities for school stakeholders to learn about the value of after school program to the school day.

STRUCTURE COMMUNICATION

A little bit of structure can go a long way when communicating with school day staff. Consider developing simple meeting protocols that encourage staff members from both the after school program and school day to talk specifically about curricula, enrichment activities, or the academic needs of students.

Consider developing a form to ask teachers what themes are being learned for the week, how students are being grouped for activities, or which specific skills students need to work on. This will get you better results than asking, "what do students need?" by identifying specific ways after school programs can design engaging activities that support school-day learning.

'THE STRONGEST PERSONALITY IN THE ROOM IS THE DATA, NOT THE PEOPLE IN THE ROOM'

Communication should focus on the shared interest of school day and after school staff: helping young people thrive. Focusing on data helps adults stay focused on how they can best help youth.

ESTABLISH A COMMON LANGUAGE

YD? PBL? PLCs? ELs? Using terms and acronyms that are unfamiliar to some stakeholders can create unnecessary confusion. Make sure everyone is on the same page and using the same vocabulary.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HOW TO COMMUNICATE ACROSS THE SCHOOL DAY, VISIT:

- ASAP Connect—Alignment and Linkages with the School Day: www.afterschoolconnect. org/program_resources/directory_alignment_school

- Afterschool Alliance (2007). *Afterschool: The Bridge Connecting Schools and Communities.* Issue Brief No. 30.

Assess your program for continuous quality improvement in this category using the *California After-School Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool.* For free access to the tool go to http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/qsatool

> ## Try this Tip!
> Make sure everyone uses the same vocabulary to assure clarity in communication.

PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT AND SAFETY—
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Youth use equipment and space that is clean, well maintained and safe.

HAVING ADEQUATE SPACE that is clean, well maintained, and safe makes it easier to offer a variety of activities for youth, which increases engagement. It also provides a professional impression to school staff and parents, and increases positive regard among core school day stakeholders, from school maintenance staff to school administration. Often times in school-based after school programming, negotiating that space can be difficult.

The following are key strategies for sharing space from San Francisco Bay Area after school programs.

CREATE BUY-IN WITH SCHOOL-DAY STAKEHOLDERS

Visibility during the school day and open communication about what the after school program does is important to garnering buy in from school day stuff. At Lincoln Elementary in Oakland, the program's Site Coordinator meets at the beginning of the school year with teachers to emphasize the benefits of after school activities for students. At AP Gianni Elementary in San Francisco, program staff are available as extra resources for teachers during the school day, whether as a field trip chaperone, or extra pair of eyes when coordinating activities.

FORMALIZE AGREEMENTS WITH TEACHERS WHEN USING THEIR SPACE

Having a written agreement about how your program will use classroom space shows teachers that you will treat their space as a valuable commodity. At Life Academy in Oakland, signed agreements are made early in the school year with teachers, promising to keep the space clean and orderly.

MAKE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OPEN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM STAFF

At Lincoln, program staff and teachers use a written log to communicate needs and concerns about shared space.

BE FLEXIBLE

Consider the fact that you are borrowing someone's work space, and that at times, they may need to use it for parent-teacher conferences, planning time, or special tutorial sessions. Reserve "just-in-case" rooms and encourage staff to change their activities for the day to accommodate teachers' needs.

GO ABOVE AND BEYOND IN MAINTAINING SCHOOL SPACE

A little extra effort can go a long way in establishing positive relationships with teachers. At Life Academy, the program hosts a "School Day Clean up" on a Saturday. At AP Gianni Elementary in San Francisco, the program replaces any missing or lost items from teacher's spaces twofold with no questions asked—so if a teacher reports two pencils are missing, the program will replace with four.

Try this Tip!

You can never say 'thank you' enough! Have your kids make thank you cards to teachers for allowing them to use their classroom. The holidays and the end of the school year are perfect times to appreciate teachers for their support.

LEAVE THE SPACE HOW YOU FOUND IT

Any good policy for sharing spaces is to always return the space back to how you found it. Take a quick picture on your camera phone of how the room looks like in the beginning of program, so that you can have a reference point of getting things exactly where they were prior to an activity.

SAY THANK YOU

Showing your appreciation goes a long way. Have your students make thank you cards at the end of the year or before the holidays to thank teachers for sharing their space.

FOR MORE TIPS ON HOW TO SHARE SPACE, SEE:

• The Coalition for Community Schools: www.communityschools.org

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YOUTH DEVELOPMENT—SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Staff provide specific feedback to youth about positive behavior and accomplishments.

SECTION 6: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

A quality program employs research-based youth development strategies that reflect a complementary, holistic approach that is built on youths' assets and promise rather than risk prevention and repairing deficits. Rather than a separate activity or strand of programming, youth development philosophy describes the manner in which programs do what they do – providing a set of guiding principles that can be incorporated into any kind of after school program or activity.

THIS ELEMENT IS DIVIDED INTO THREE SUB-SECTIONS:
Supportive Environment: A quality program develops, nurtures and maintains positive relationships and interactions and supports young people as they try new things.
Interaction: A quality program is structured to encourage participation and ownership by youth.
Engagement: A quality program provides participants with an opportunity to play a meaningful, active role in their program, so that youth can have input into decision-making, opportunities to take responsibility and demonstrate leadership.

ALL AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS can benefit from incorporating youth development practices into their work – it's *how* to do *what* you do in after school.

Bonnie Bernard of WestEd and Andy Paul of Youth Development Network shared tips for providing feedback to youth:

OFFER CONTINUOUS AND GENUINE PRAISE—A "COMPLIMENT SANDWICH"

Youth respond better to praise rather than criticism. Staff can re-frame criticism by first praising youth for small and large accomplishments, offering advice for improvement, followed by another compliment. For example, starting off by saying, "It looks like you have something very important to tell me", then moving onto say, "Can you say 'excuse me' or wait until I am finished, please?", and finalizing that comment with "You always have something interesting to say, so I want you to have my full attention."

Also consider specific encouragement, rather than generic praise, because it allows youth to better understand their accomplishments. Try saying, "I noticed that you really took leadership during that group discussion" instead of "Good job."

CONTINUALLY TELL AND PRACTICE THIS SAYING TO YOUTH, "YOU CAN DO IT; I'M THERE TO SUPPORT YOU"

Youth need to be held to high, clear, expectations and encouraged to meet those expectations along the way. It is important that youth understand the expectations that they are being held to. Consider working with youth to design a behavior agreement for the after school program, and posting this agreement in a visible place for all participants. This also allows program staff to practice positive behavior guidance when expectations are not met. If a caring relationship and clear expectations are in place, program staff can tell young people, "I know you, and I know you are better than that choice." This can be a profound experience for youth.

FOCUS ON THE STRENGTHS OF THE YOUTH

One way to encourage youth is to focus on their strengths. For example, we may see someone who is disorganized as having his or her own creative way of organization. Somebody who is seen as rebellious may also be viewed as an independent critical thinker. We may see a short attention span as somebody who is curious, thinking ahead, or alert. When program staff genuinely look for the strengths of youth in every opportunity, they are in a much better position to offer support in a positive way.

CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING TRAININGS AND TOOLS AVAILABLE TO AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS:

- After School Assistance Providers organization: www.afterschoolconnect.org
- California School-Age Consortium: www.calsac.org
- California Afterschool Resource Center: www.californiaafterschool.org
- *You Matter! The Power of After School Program Staff to Make a Difference in the Lives of Children and You* Training information: www.wested.org
- *Exemplary Practices in Youth Development*: www.ccscenter.org

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Assess your program for continuous quality improvement in this category using the *California After-School Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool.* For free access to the tool go to http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/qsatool

Try this Tip!

Try changing your perspective: is that student rebellious, or an independent thinker? Is she disorganized, or just has a creative way of organization? Changing your frame of mind can help you support youth in a positive way.

STAFF RECRUITMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Veteran staff have the opportunity for professional growth and development, such as by coaching other staff members, attending trainings and conferences, or representing the program in the community.

YOUTH WORKERS WHO participate in education and training opportunities provide higher quality services to youth and stay in their jobs longer.

Peer mentor programs is one way for newer staff to receive customized, one-to-one support, and can be a valuable professional development opportunity for veteran staff members.

Barbara Metzuk, Sacramento County Office of Education, Region 3 Co-Regional Lead and Senior Mentor, Lisa Skaarup, Regional Mentor from Folsom-Cordova Unified School District and Glenda Larson, Regional Mentor of the Twin Rivers Unified School District, have three tips for successful peer mentorship in after school:

CREATE MENTOR-MENTEE RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS DIFFERENT SITES AND LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE

Both mentors and mentees alike can benefit from exchanging different ideas. Likewise, pairing mentors who are more experienced with new staff allows for knowledge—sharing that can create a welcoming environment for new staff to grow professionally. Paring mentors can also assist newer staff in quickly putting processes, while also overcoming common obstacles and thereby reducing burnout.

At Twin Rivers Unified School District, after school program mentors were paired with mentees from different sites, which also allowed for mentors to learn and experience the nuances of working in different environments. Also, because mentors and mentees came from different agencies, they were able to share new promising practices with their colleagues.

ENCOURAGE MENTORS AND MENTEES TO TRACK THEIR PROGRESS

It is critical for mentor-mentee pairs to create manageable and realistic goals to work toward throughout the year. At Twin Rivers Unified School District, a mentee's goal was set to increase parental engagement. Both the mentor and mentee were able to design a way to keep track of phone calls made to parents as a measurement of increased engagement with families. At Folsom-Cordova, a mentee's goal was to improve her behavior management skills by learning to project her voice and by interviewing retired school district administrators about successful group management strategies.

CREATE A SPACE TO CELEBRATE ACHIEVEMENTS

To extend the benefits of mentorship, mentors and mentees should share lessons learned and celebrate their achievements. At Folsom-Cordova and Twin Rivers, 15 mentees and mentors combined came together to share their work throughout the year through an open house exhibition, complete with presentation boards, handouts, and brief verbal presentations. School day principals were excited to see and celebrate their after school program staffs' growth, while also learning about the other districts' experiences.

Try this Tip!

Peer mentorship is a great form of professional development for both veteran and new staff.

STAFF RECRUITMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Continued from previous page

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM STAFF, CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING:

- California After School Network's Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Project: www.mentor.afterschoolnetwork.org
- Afterschool.org Professional Development Web Page: www.afterschool.org/professionaldevelopment
- Resources on Afterschool: www.afterschoolresources.org
- Mott Foundation's *Core Competencies for Afterschool Educators:* www.afterschoolprofessional.info
- National Center for Quality Afterschool Afterschool Training Toolkit: www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/
- University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice (2007). *Promising Practices in Out of School Time Professional Development.*

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FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Staff make a regular effort to share positive information with parents and caregivers about their child through both written updates and conversations.

POSITIVE, MUTUALLY RESPECTFUL relationships are key to family involvement. One way to create these relationships is to share good news with parents about their kids. This requires staff members to get to know parents individually and to establish regular routines for sharing positive feedback.

Ray Trinidad from !mpact People and Lizette Zarate from Woodcraft Rangers shared six promising practices:

CALL PARENTS BEFORE ANY MISBEHAVIOR OCCURS

Staff should make a phone call to families to touch base about their children. For instance, staff can call to say, "Hi, I just wanted to call and say that we are happy to have Johnny in our program. He attends Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and if you have any questions, feel free to ask." This way, you have reached out to send the message that you care about the parent and her/his child.

GREET PARENTS AT THE SIGN OUT AREA.

Not only should staff know each child's name in the program, but they should know the parents' names, as well. Have the program Site Coordinator lead sign-out a few days a week to get to know parents.

CREATE A HOMEWORK BOARD

Woodcraft Rangers has a Homework Board at the sign out area for parents to see whether their child has completed homework, still needs to spend time on assignments, or needs a parent to review her/his work. Homework boards help to create a culture of responsibility around homework, and encourage daily communication between parents and staff.

CELEBRATE AND REWARD ACHIEVEMENTS

Both parents and children benefit from being recognized for a child's achievement, including displaying outstanding behavior, doing good deeds, and showing leadership. Programs can institute achievement awards, such as "Caught You Being Good" rewards.

CREATE FAMILY-FRIENDLY OPPORTUNITIES FOR KIDS TO SHOW OFF THEIR SKILLS

To encourage parents to attend events, create a welcoming and fun atmosphere that both youth and parents can enjoy. Food, for instance, is a major incentive to encourage parental attendance at events. At Woodcraft Rangers, family literacy nights have a party-like atmosphere to put parents and kids at ease, including food donated from a local restaurant. They have also implemented creative themes such as sleepy time, castles, and around the world travel.

ASK YOUR PARENTS TO HELP OUT

Another strategy to open up positive relationships with parents is to utilize their skills to support the program. !mpact People asks for a parent's time, talent, and testimony through letters home and in conversations during pick-up time. Whether it is being able to provide materials and resources, or volunteering to run a workshop, the first step is to see your parents as an invaluable resource for the program.

> ## Try this Tip!
> Accentuate the positive! Call parents and talk to them about their student before any problem behavior arises. At the same time, reward the successes and accomplishments of youth—especially good behavior.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT
Continued from previous page

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HOW TO EFFECTIVELY
ENGAGE FAMILIES IN THE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM, CHECK
OUT THE FOLLOWING RESOURCE GUIDES:

- Afterschool Alliance (2008). *Afterschool: Supporting Family Involvement in Schools.* Issue Brief No. 32.
- Harvard Research Project (2002). *Beyond the Head Count: Evaluating Family Involvement in Out-of-School Time*.
- Our Children (2007). *Improve Family Engagement in After School Programs.*

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NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY—
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
Youth have the opportunity to engage in daily moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.
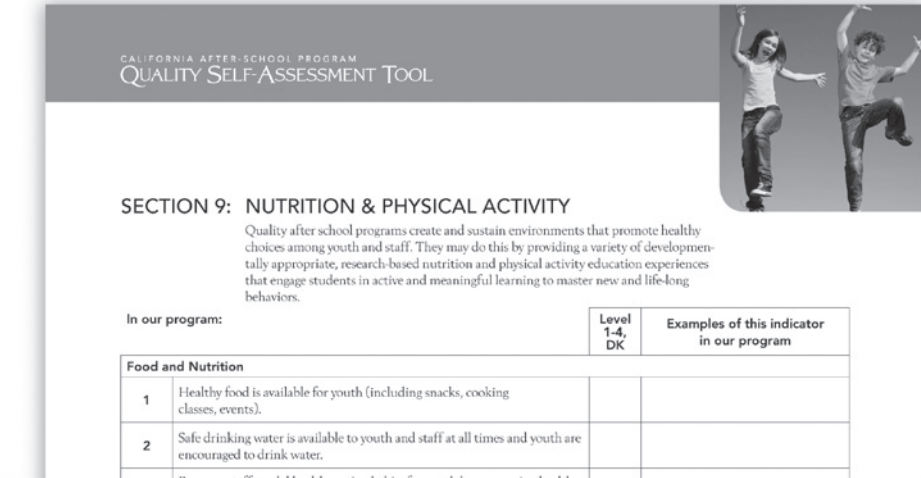
AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS are a great place for kids to get active! Research shows that physical activity has a positive impact on academic success, children's health, weight, and self-image.

How can programs design and implement engaging physical activities in an already jam-packed program schedule?

Tips from the Mighty Milers Program in San Juan Unified and Sacramento START can help programs incorporate physical activity into their daily routine.

USE EXISTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TOOLKITS OR CURRICULA
There are plenty of free and low-cost materials that can provide a jump-start to your program's physical activity component. after school programs with sufficient financial resources should also check out high-quality evidence-based physical activity programs such as CATCH and SPARK.

PROMOTE GOAL SETTING AND TEAMWORK
Motivating youth includes setting short-term milestones and long-term goals to encourage teamwork. In the Mighty Milers Program, youth and staff set short-term and long term walking and running goals together. An example of a fun long-term goal is to run or walk across the United States in the program. At one after school program, youth have a goal to walk or run across the world. Youth receive incentives and can track their individual and team progress to help link their hard work with positive rewards.

ENSURE THAT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OFFERINGS ARE PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY SAFE
Assure that staff have the proper training about creating a positive, collaborative environment for physical activity. For example, don't force participation, but encourage youth to join in physical activities, be sure there are a variety of activities for everyone, provide alternatives to competitive activities, and place youth into small groups where they feel comfortable.

INTEGRATE ACADEMIC SKILLS WITH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
Physical activities are opportunities for academic enrichment. In the Mighty Milers program, youth use math skills to tally their own weekly progress. Youth can also keep track of their progress in daily writing journals, integrate math concepts into physical activity games (like hop scotch addition), or go for a nature walk to identify plants and animals.

MAKE THE MOST OF TRANSITIONS
The Mighty Milers start off the day with 20 minutes of running, walking, or physical activity. Sacramento START has used the CATCH curriculum that relies on games and activities that students already enjoy, including tag games, basketball, jump rope, and hop scotch.

Try this Tip!
Incorporate physical activity at the start of program or during transition times— when youth are full of energy and already moving, so it's a great chance for exercise!

NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY—PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
Continued from previous page

CONNECT ACTIVITIES WITH LOCAL DISTRICT WELLNESS POLICIES
All school districts have wellness policies that describe how schools support children's health and well being. Consider aligning your efforts to those policies so that kids are getting a consistent message about wellness.

THERE IS A WEALTH OF INFORMATION ON THE WEB, INCLUDING TOOLS, STANDARDS, AND ACTIVITY IDEAS AND TIPS FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

- California After School Resource Center (CASRC)– Physical Activity Web-based Tool-kit. www.californiaafterschool.org

- California Afterschool Network– Nutrition and Physical Activity resource page: www.afterschoolnetwork.org/nutrition_pa

- CanFit: www.canfit.org

- Afterschool Physical Activity Website: www.afterschoolpa.com

- Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Physical Activity Guidelines: www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/physical

- Active Living Research's research brief, *Active Education: Physical Education, Physical Activity and Academic Performance*: www.rwjf.org/files/research/20090925alractiveeducation.pdf

- California Department of Education's *California After School Physical Activity Guidelines*: www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba/as/documents/paguidelines.pdf

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PROMOTING DIVERSITY, ACCESS, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Staff and leadership make reasonable accommodations to serve youth with learning differences, such as breaking activities into smaller parts, working in smaller groups, and providing extra time to complete tasks.

HIGH QUALITY AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS provide a welcoming environment for all children, regardless of their ethnicity, the language they speak, how they look or see, hear, think or walk. Fortunately, many of the strategies that benefit youth with special needs can benefit all youth.

How do programs create activities that are welcoming and engaging for all youth? Below are some promising practices provided by the National Training Center on Inclusion at Kids Included Together and the Special Needs Inclusion Project:

> ## Try this Tip!
> Creating schedules with visual cues supports all learners. It also allows for youth to transition smoothly from activities and know what to expect for the day.

CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT UPFRONT BY ARTICULATING AND PRACTICING A CLEAR INCLUSION PHILOSOPHY

Your program can encourage parents to share information on their children's specific needs with you when your staffs' attitudes, materials and program information reflect your inclusive philosophy. One program includes this statement on their registration materials: "Parks & Recreation welcomes individuals of all abilities to participate in all recreation programs and activities. All programs offered by Parks & Recreation encourage participation by a diverse population, accommodate those with varying abilities, and support diverse learning styles."

START WITH THE INDIVIDUAL

Because each individual's needs are unique, even if they have the same diagnosis, after school programs should get to know each child and adapt physical, sensory and social environments accordingly. Parents, school-day staff, and youth are good resources to ask about appropriate accommodations. Be aware that you must have a parent's permission to contact school day staff for specific information about a child's special needs.

CREATE A STABLE AND CONSISTENT ENVIRONMENT

All youth thrive on consistency, which helps kids know what to expect. This can be particularly true for youth with special needs. Ensure that staff consistently prepare children for upcoming activities with individualized cues and supports.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY THE ACTIVITIES AND SCHEDULES TO YOUTH

Consider enhancing your program schedule to include visual cues, which support all learners. An example is a picture of a child washing and drying hands placed by the sink. Visual schedules can be utilized by the whole group, or individually for a child needing extra support.

PROMOTING DIVERSITY, ACCESS, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Continued from previous page

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE HARD OR EXPENSIVE

Small changes can be made to existing environments, including rearranging the room so that a child using a wheelchair can move about easily, allowing a child to wear headphones to screen out noise, providing written materials in large print or Braille, lowering the basketball hoop, playing games that emphasize cooperation rather than competition, and using balls with bells in them. These small changes can make a tremendous difference for how all children interact with one another and with staff.

CONSIDER INCREASING RATIOS OF STAFF TO CHILDREN TO SUPPORT INCLUSION

More adult supervision can help support inclusion, and is sometimes only necessary in transition periods or when a child is adjusting to a new program environment. Consider adjusting staffing patterns to provide extra support where needed.

MAKE INCLUSION A PART OF ALL TRAININGS

Educate staff and volunteers about inclusion, so that they are able to implement and use inclusion practices in their interactions with youth. Training topics should include the Americans with Disabilities Act, using person-first language, behavior support, program planning strategies, awareness of attitudinal barriers and use of adaptive equipment.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON INCLUSION PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES FOR AFTERSCHOOL, INCLUDING INFORMATION ON TRAINING AND TIPS FOR CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS, VISIT THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES:

- California After School Resource Center: www.californiaafterschool.org
- Kids Included Together: www.kitonline.org
- Circle of Inclusion: www.circleofinclusion.org
- Special Needs Inclusion Project: www.snipsf.org
- The California After School Inclusion Project: call 866-920-4625 or email northinclusion@californiaafterschool.org (Regions 1 – 7) or southinclusion@californiaafterschool.org (Regions 8 – 11).

Assess your program for continuous quality improvement in this category using the *California After-School Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool.* For free access to the tool go to http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/qsatool

EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTING ENGLISH LEARNERS

Staff provide an environment and activities that encourage English Learners to practice oral English skills without fear of judgment or ridicule.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS are a great place to create a relaxed and an encouraging environment where English Learners (ELs) can feel comfortable practicing their language skills.

Staff play an important role in creating activities and an environment that encourages EL youth to practice communicating in English. Kim Boyer from the Central Valley Afterschool Foundation, shares a few strategies and practices:

PAIR ENGLISH LEARNERS WITH AN ENGLISH SPEAKING PEER BUDDY

Language learning is social. The buddy system is a powerful tool to create a non-threatening environment for ELs to practice speaking. An after school program in the Central Valley pairs advanced English Learners with beginning English speakers for homework help.

HELP LEARNERS PARTICIPATE IN DIFFERENT AND VARIED WAYS

Small groups and project-based learning are good ways for English Learners to be actively involved in language skill building. Activities that involve repeating after a speaker (such as Simon Says), singing in a group, interviewing friends, describing experiences, summarizing stories, interviewing strangers, and offering opinions are fun ways to practice English. One Central Valley after school program even uses karaoke, which blends singing along with familiar songs with written English lyrics.

LINK WITH THE SCHOOL DAY TO IDENTIFY ENGLISH LEARNERS' NEEDS

Keeping in touch with ELs' school day teachers can help programs tailor activities to young people's skill level. At one program, the Site Coordinator worked directly with their school's EL Coordinator to identify youth who can benefit from after school academic support classes specific to ELs. The after school Site Coordinator and school-day EL Coordinator jointly track participants' fluency levels and explore ongoing opportunities to support ELs on their road to mastery.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN AFTER SCHOOL, LOOK AT THE FOLLOWING:

- California Afterschool Network: www.afterschoolnetwork.org/english_learners
- The Center for Afterschool Education (2007). *More than Just Talk: English Language Learning in Afterschool.*

Assess your program for continuous quality improvement in this category using the *California After-School Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool.* For free access to the tool go to http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/qsatool

> ## Try this Tip!
>
> Everyone loves karaoke! Try using karaoke and having youth sing familiar songs— that way, they can practice their literacy and oral language skills while having fun.

Notes